

RECREATIONS  
IN  
AGRICULTURE, NATURAL-HISTORY,  
ARTS,  
AND  
MISCELLANEOUS LITERATURE.

BY  
JAMES ANDERSON, LLD.  
FRS. and FSA. E.

Honorary member of the Society of Arts, Agriculture, &c. Bath; of the Philosophical Society, Manchester; of the Agricultural Society, Altringham; of the Philosophical Society, Newcastle; of the Society for promoting Natural History, London; of the Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Belles Lettres, Dijon; of the Royal Society of Agriculture, St. Petersburgh; of the Royal Economical Society, Berlin; of the Philosophical Society, Philadelphia; correspondent member of the Royal Society of Agriculture, Paris; and author of several performances.

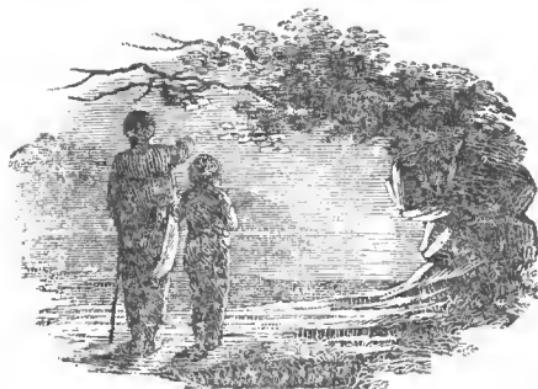
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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. BACON.

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AUGUST 1801.

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*RECREATIONS, &c.*

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N<sup>o</sup> 6. Second Series, Vol. I.

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*A comparative view of the effects of rent and of tythe in influencing the price of corn.*

IN the discussions that now so frequently occur respecting the high price of grain, we often hear rent and tithe mentioned as causes of the very great enhancement of that article; and, in general, they seem to be viewed by these writers as operating precisely after the same manner in raising the price of bread-corn in this island. As it appears to me that they operate after a very different manner; and as it would lead, I think, to very erroneous conclusions were their effects considered of a similar tendency, I think it expedient to appropriate a few pages of this miscellany to the careful investigation of this question.

That there is a necessary connexion between the rent of corn land and the price of grain, and that the amount of the one influences the other in certain respects, will not be denied by any thinking person; though it is not every one that knows whether it be that the price of grain influences the amount of the rent of land, or the amount of rent that influences the

to begin with. I mean the Minorca asfs, which is larger than they are in England, and very strong and hardy. I mention this the more, as by a peace the island may again be restored to the Spaniards, who will not allow of their being sent out of the island. Several of them may with ease be brought to England by the transports which are daily returning. Their swine appear also to be an object, being very large.

The large Aleppo asfs, with remarkably large ears, is also deserving of notice. I am, sir, with best wishes for your health that you may be able to pursue your useful labours, yours,

I. B.

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*Communications of this sort will be always acceptable. It is a pity that useful hints of this kind are so seldom communicated to the public by those who have opportunities of observing them. Facts are much wanted in economics, on which alone just reasoning can be grounded.*

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*To Correspondents.*

THE friendly strictures of *Amicus* have been received, and are thankfully acknowledged. He does the Editor justice in thinking that he could not wantonly sport with the feelings of any human being. The passage he hints at (the first of the reading memorandums last Number) is justly censurable on that account. These were selected by a friend, in whose judgment the Editor confided, and the hurry in printing the last sheet prevented him from having it in his power to revise it with the care it would otherwise have received. He one more thanks *Amicus* for giving him this opportunity of expressing his regret that such a passage should have slipped in unnoticed. He trusts few such will be found.

Acknowledgments to other Correspondents deferred for want of room.

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*Erratum in our last.*

Page 316, Delete the whole of the first paragraph of the Reading Memorandums.

AUGUST 1801.

## RECREATIONS, &amp;c.

N<sup>o</sup> 6. Second Series, Vol. I.*A comparative view of the effects of rent and of tythe in influencing the price of corn.*

IN the discussions that now so frequently occur respecting the high price of grain, we often hear rent and tithe mentioned as causes of the very great enhancement of that article; and, in general, they seem to be viewed by these writers as operating precisely after the same manner in raising the price of bread-corn in this island. As it appears to me that they operate after a very different manner; and as it would lead, I think, to very erroneous conclusions were their effects considered of a similar tendency, I think it expedient to appropriate a few pages of this miscellany to the careful investigation of this question.

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price of grain; but, till this point be ascertained, it is impossible to form adequate notions on the subject. With a view to do this, the following circumstances must be adverted to.

Grain, it is very evident, can in no ease be raised without a certain degree of labour and expence, the price of which must be repaid to the grower, otherwise he cannot afford to produce it. This may be said, in the strictest sense, to constitute *its intrinsic* price.

Money being accounted the common measure of value, this price will be affected by the quantity of money that can be obtained for labour, in general, in that place at the time. The farmer must give those he employs wages in proportion to what they can get in other employments; so that, if these wages are high, the farmer's charge must be high also. And the *intrinsic price* of his corn must rise, as the rate of this expence is augmented.

The intrinsic price of grain, however, all other circumstances being alike, must vary with the fertility of the soil on which it is produced. On a rich soil, less labour and less seed will produce a given quantity of grain than they will do on a soil that is less productive; so that, strictly speaking, the intrinsic price of corn, when considered only in this point of view, will be different on almost every different field. How then, it may be asked, can its intrinsic value be apportioned over a vast tract of country, possessing a diversity of soils of various degrees of fertility; and how shall matters be so managed, as that all the rearers of it shall draw nearly the same price for their grain, and have nearly the same profits?

All this is effected in the easiest and most natural manner by means of rent. *Rent* is, in fact, nothing else than a simple and ingenious contrivance, for equalising the profits to be drawn from fields of different degrees of fertility, and of local circumstances, which tend to augment or diminish the expence of culture. To make this plain, a few elucidations will be necessary.

In every country where men exist, there will be an effective demand for a certain quantity of grain: by *effective demand*, I mean a demand which must be supplied, that the inhabitants may all be properly subsisted. It is this demand which in all cases regulates the price of grain; for the quantity of grain required in this case must be had, and the price that is necessary for producing that quantity of corn must be paid, whatever that may be. These calls are of such a pressing nature as not to be dispensed with.

For the sake of illustration we shall, in the present case, assume, that the whole of the different soils of the country are arranged into classes according to their degrees of fertility; which classes we shall at present denote by the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, &c. Let those fields comprehended in the class A be the richest; those in the class B the second; and so on, decreasing one degree in fertility for each class as you advance towards G. Now, as the expence of cultivating the least fertile soil is as great, or greater, than that of cultivating the most fertile field, it must happen, that if an equal quantity of grain, the produce of each class of fields, can be sold at the same price, the profit on cultivating the most fertile field will be greater, if no

precautions were taken to guard against it, than could be obtained by cultivating those which are less fertile. And as this profit will continue to decrease, as sterility increases, it must at last happen, whatever be the price of corn, that the expence of cultivating some of the inferior classes of soils must equal, or exceed the value of the whole produce.

This being admitted, let us suppose that the effective demand was such as to raise the price of grain, 'say to ten shillings *per* bushel; and that the fields included in the class F could just admit of defraying all expences, and no more, when corn was at that price; that those in the class E could admit of being cultivated when the price was only nine shillings *per* bushel; and that, in like manner, the classes D, C, B, and A, consisted of fields which could have barely paid the expences of cultivation, respectively, when the prices were at eight, seven, six, and five shillings *per* bushel.

In these circumstances it would happen, that those persons who possessed the fields in the class of F would be able to afford no rent at all; nor could any rent be afforded in this case for those of G, or other more steril fields *for the purpose of rearing* corn: but it is also evident, that those who possessed fields in the class E could not only pay the expence of cultivating them, but could also afford a rent to the proprietor equal to one shilling for every bushel of free produce; and in like manner those who possessed the fields D, C, B, and A, would be able to afford a rent equal to two, three, four, and five shillings *per* bushel of their free produce respectively. Nor would the proprietors of

these rich fields find any difficulty in obtaining these rents; because farmers finding they could live equally well after paying such rents upon these soils, as they could afford to do upon the fields in the classes F, without any rent at all, they would be equally willing to take these fields as the others. Thus it is that rent equalises the profit on different soils in the most natural and easy manner, without tending in any degree to affect the price of grain.

Let us, however, once more suppose, that the whole produce of all the fields in the classes A, B, C, D, E, and F, were not sufficient to maintain the whole of the inhabitants of that district. In that case one of two things must happen: either the price of grain must rise to eleven shillings, so as to induce the owners of the fields in the classes G to bring them into culture; or a supply must be brought from some other place to answer that demand. In the first case, the fields G being brought into culture, those in the class F would now be able to afford a rent equal to one shilling *per* bushel of free produce; and all the other classes could admit a similar rise. Here then we clearly perceive, that it is the price of grain that affects the rent, and not the rent that affects the price of the grain, as has been very often mistakenly alledged.

The natural consequence of such an increased demand for grain, and augmentation of price, is the converting of barren fields into corn lands, which never otherwise could have become such. A much greater quantity of grain is thus produced than would otherwise have been possible; and a more spirited agriculture every where takes place. By these exertions the

fields which originally ranked in the class G pass into that of F, and, by a gradual progression, they slide successively into the classes E, D, C, till at length they even reach the same station that the class A originally occupied itself. In consequence of every one of these steps, a prodigious augmentation in the quantity of corn reared is produced. The farmer is also enabled to sell it at a lower price than formerly, although he affords a higher rent; so that every member of the community is benefited by the change.

It is beautiful to trace the operation of natural causes on the physical and political world, when they are suffered to operate freely. When population is augmented, and industry flourishing in a nation, we have seen that it must of necessity occasion a greater demand for the products of agriculture than formerly. This gives a brisker sale, which augments the industry of the farmer: more corn is thus produced. Some people would call this a creation, because corn is obtained where it would never otherwise have been produced. This corn, once raised, produces more manure, which, judiciously applied to the soil, gives additional produce. In this manner a beneficial progression is established, that admits of an extension, the limits of which no man can foresee. As the people increase, the means of supporting these people is augmented; so that a country, though it may be at the present moment seemingly capable of maintaining no more than barely its present inhabitants, may yet, by a gradual increase, under a judicious government, have that produce augmented so as to be able to support perhaps a hundred times its present population; and yet be even more

capable of furnishing subsistence to its inhabitants than it is at present. These particulars admit of the clearest proof, both by reasoning *a priori*, and by a fair induction of facts, which our limits alone at present forbid to enumerate. Nor is the converse of this proposition less demonstratively certain, *viz.* that by diminishing the number of inhabitants, and thus decreasing the demand for the produce of the fields, the quantity of that produce will be decreased,—the rents will of course fall,—the lands will slide back into the state that does not admit the expence of cultivation,—the total produce of all the fields, considered as an aggregate of grass and corn, will fall much short of what they formerly yielded,\*—and the few inhabitants that remain will find only a scanty subsistence, where a much more numerous people formerly enjoyed plenty. It is thus the people of Palestine, though not one-hundredth of the number which once inhabited it in a state of abundance, now find a difficulty to pick up a scanty subsistence there. This, some persons may perhaps ascribe to the supernatural influence of divine malediction having dried up the sources of plenty there. To avoid arguing on this head, we need only turn our eyes to Spain, which, three centuries ago, nourished four times, at least, the number of people it now contains. It could then afford abundance of food for all

\* When land is suffered to run into grass after being cultivated, unless it be of the very richest quality, it gradually produces less and less than at first, so as in time to afford scarce any food at all for domestic animals. This is a fact that some inattentive observers will perhaps be disposed to controvert. I wish to God England were in that condition, as not to afford any proofs of it, which are at present but too numerous!

its people, and to spare: its inhabitants now are frequently obliged to have recourse to foreign aid to prevent them from starving. This phenomenon we are not to consider as in the smallest degree miraculous: it would have indeed been miraculous had it been otherwise.

Such are the natural operations of *rent* upon the production of grain, and the reciprocations between that and the price on a corn farm; which, though simple when once understood, and irresistible in its effects, is, like all the other reciprocations of nature, by no means obvious upon a superficial view of things. Private interest is in this, as it ought to be in every case in well regulated society, the true *primum mobile*, and the great source of public good; which, though operating unseen, never ceases one moment to act with unabating power, and undeviating steadiness, for the general good, if it be not perverted by the futile regulations of some short-sighted politieian.

*Tythe* is precisely the same with rent in *one* respect: they are both alike calculated to draw from the soil the means of subsistence for a body of men who bear no share in the trouble or expence of cultivating that soil. In this particular they are precisely alike; but in no one other that I can perceive: and their operation, in as far as concerns the public weal, will be found to be entirely different. This will, perhaps, be best manifested by having recourse to some practical illustrations.

Let us suppose, that a farmer possesses a tract of waste ground, the natural produce of which is just sufficient to enable him to pay a rent of five shillings

an acre, and no more; and that when corn sells at the rate of five shillings per bushel, the expence of cultivating that soil exceeds the average value of its produce a small matter; so that he finds it necessary, under these circumstances, to suffer it to lie uncultivated, and of course it produces no corn.

Let us farther suppose, that the price of corn rises to 5s. and 6d. per bushel; the farmer then begins to feel, that if a certain portion of his land were converted into tillage, the rent continuing the same as formerly, he might derive a small profit from that; say perhaps three-pence per bushel in a favourable year. If he thinks this enough to indemnify him for his trouble and risk, he will then set himself to convert some part of his fields into tillage.

Let us farther suppose, that the average produce of such land when brought into proper tillage amounts to twelve bushels per acre. The total value of the produce then, if all sold, would amount to 66 shillings.

But the farmer can in no case sell the whole of his corn crop. In order to carry on his operations he must reserve seed, and corn to support his labourers and cattle employed necessarily in rearing it. Instead of being able to sell the whole of the twelve bushels, its total produce, he must deduct then first the seed, say three bushels; and for the sustenance of his labourers and cattle, without entering into an attempt to get absolute accuracy in this case, say four bushels; in all seven bushels. There remains then only five bushels for sale, which, at 5s. and 6d. per bushel, is 27s. and 6d.

From this must be deducted

	s.	d.
For rent, by the supposition .....	5	0
For profit to the farmer on 5 bushels sold at 3d. per bushel .....	1	3
For expences including wages to servants, tear and wear of implements, interest of money, &c. &c. ....	21	3
	<hr/>	
	27	6

Thus stands his account, free of tythe. From this, however, if tythe be exacted, must be deducted the tenth part of 66 shillings, which is 6s. and 7d  $\frac{1}{4}$ : but his profits, which would have amounted to only 1s. 3d. clear without tythe, cannot enable him to pay so much as one fourth part of this sum. He must, therefore, be a loser by this undertaking, and of course will be under the necessity of desisting from it; and the public must be deprived of the whole benefit that it might have derived from the corn that would have been thus produced. Before the farmer, then, can possibly go on in the production of corn under these circumstances, the price of corn must rise not to 5s. and 6d. only, but to more than 6s. and 6d. per bushel. Thus does tythe in every case tend at the same time to enhance the price of grain, and diminish the produce of the country.

Please also here to take notice that tythe, instead of being the tenth part of the free produce of the ground, as it is by many conceived to be, is four times at least the amount of the whole of that free produce in this case. Instead of being a tenth part even of the *saleable* produce, which in this case is only five

bushels, value 27s. 6d. it is 6s. 7d.  $\frac{1}{2}$ , which is very nearly one-fourth part of it.

It also tends to retard the exertions of industry in the agricultural line to an astonishing degree; and by that means still farther to retard the improvement of our fields, and diminish the total amount of the produce of the country; so as to render it necessary to have recourse to foreign aid, when no such thing could have been wanted had its baneful influence been withdrawn. To render this position evident, I shall beg leave to state one other illustrative case.

Let us suppose a tenant in the possession of a farm under the protection of a lease, which secures to him and his heirs, for a considerable number of years, the whole profits that he shall be able by his skill and industry, aided by a competent capital, to make it produce. The value of its present produce, we shall suppose, is not more than one shilling per acre; and, of course, it cannot defray, at once, the expence of cultivating the soil so as to render it productive. Let us farther suppose, that this man, in consequence of his skill, knows that by a judicious application of manures, draining, and proper culture in other respects, he will be able to bring that soil into such a tilth as that it shall be capable of producing such crops, as in the course of a certain period of years, shall be sufficient to repay him for his labour, and the heavy expence that must be incurred before it can be brought to produce corn of any sort. Let us farther state, that the expence to be incurred, at the first, does not amount to less than twenty pounds an acre before it can be made to produce any crop at all; but that, in conse-

quence of that expenditure at first, it could be put into such a condition as to yield, on an average of crops under judicious culture, at the rate of twenty bushels per acre: that at this rate, corn selling at five shillings per bushel, it will require ten years to repay to him the twenty pounds of capital that he had originally expended upon it, together with the legal interest on that sum during the time it was in advance, and that he contented himself with the profits which he was to derive from the sale of this improved produce during the remaining years of his lease. All this being supposed to happen where no tythe was paid, let us now see what would be the condition of this farmer if the tythe were not to be exacted.

After deducting seven bushels for seed and labouring support, the farmer would have annually thirteen bushels to dispose of, free from tythe; which, at 5s. per bushel, amounts to 65 shillings; from which deduct 20 shillings, as the interest of his capital, and 25s. as a sinking fund, and rent 1s.; in all, 46s.: which leaves 19 shillings a year behind, as the current expences of cultivating, including manures, for an average of years. After the tenth year, then, he draws 19s. per acre profit; before which time he had none at all.

But, had he the tythe to deduct from this produce, the case would stand thus: the tythe of 20 bushels is two; which, at 5 shillings per bushel, is 10 shillings. He cannot, therefore, save himself; he must lose this sum annually, and this without the possibility of ever getting any return for it. This kind of improvement must, therefore, be entirely at a stand in a country so

circumstanced. His grounds must continue to lie waste, instead of producing abundant harvests; and agricultural capital, instead of being applied with skill to cherish the industry of the farmer in the production of corn, must, where it can be obtained, be hoarded up, or applied in some other way where it can be made to yield a more adequate return. The country, instead of being improved, must therefore continue to lie in a comparative state of waste, from which it never can be reclaimed; though nothing could have been **more** easy, had it not been for this, or other injudicious regulations which tend to arrest the hand of agricultural exertion without proving beneficial to any one. Thus are the people deprived of the bread that is necessary for their subsistence, and driven, by necessity, to seek for foreign aid, thus putting themselves in the power of their enemies for their daily subsistence, and subjecting themselves to the management of jobbers and dealers, who, under these circumstances, can never be subjected to a reasonable controul, and who must batten beyond measure on the immoderate gains that are derived from the very vitals of most other classes of the people.

Nor is the evil confined to this particular case; it extends itself through every arrangement of a corn farmer. It is in few cases that a farmer can wait for ten or twenty years for a return of his capital; in general, he expects that it shall be returned nearly by the first crop; and his arrangements are, for the most part, made with that presumption. If he lays out one pound an acre annually, for obtaining manures or superior dressing of any sort, he cannot be indemnified

without receiving back at least one pound two shillings of increased produce; but in this case the tythe comes to better than two shillings on that increased produce; so that here also he is a loser. Here then he must stop. In short, under every possible view that can be taken of this subject, tythe operates as a direct bar to the exertions of industry for the production of corn: and who can compute the deficiency of produce that results from this source! Without taking into our account the defalcation that results from the obstruction to the improvement of wastes (I speak not of commons, but of poor grass-land that belongs to individual proprietors), and confining our view only to the diminution of the produce of corn lands originating in the last mentioned check to agricultural industry, which alone might be estimated, even perhaps in the first year, at not less than one-fourth part of the whole present produce of the kingdom; we shall find that this deficiency alone might be enough to enhance the price to the purchasers to perhaps the half of its whole amount.

Nor is this the whole of the evil that results from tythe in discouraging the cultivation of corn land. It deprives the farmer of the only resource that nature has provided for his indemnification in case of a scanty crop, in the rise of price which ought to be the necessary consequence of it. It is necessary that I should state this case in such a manner as to make it evident; for it seems to have been hitherto very little adverted to, or its effects upon the public in any degree appreciated.

In the example above, page 410, we have seen that where tythe is not exacted the farmer who would have

had a living profit, had the price been 5s. and 6d. per bushel, must necessarily be paid above 6s. and 6d. per bushel before he can be indemnified where the tythe is exacted.

Let us again suppose, that in consequence of an inclement season the crop has become deficient one-fourth in its usual quantity; so that instead of twelve bushels per acre, it amounts only to nine. It would seem, to a hasty observer, that if the price rises one-fourth, so that these nine bushels should bring the same price with the twelve in an ordinary year, the farmer would be indemnified. Yet this is not the case; for now, as formerly, the farmer must reserve his seed, and the food for labourers, &c. seven bushels; which, if deducted from his nine, leaves only two for sale, instead of five, which he could dispose of out of the twelve; but 5 bushels, at the rate of 5s. and 6d. is 27s. and 6d.; and two bushels, at the same rate, is only 11 shillings; to which must be added one-fourth of that sum, or 2s. and 9d. being the rise of price, in all 13s. and 9d. instead of 27s. and 6d. which is only one half of what his income was in a plentiful year with the low prices. The farmer, therefore, is no gainer by the rise of price, but a loser, as all purchasers of corn are by this change; and in this case he is a loser to double, at least, the amount of that of the purchaser; for the latter sustains only an amount of one fourth of what he expends *on this article* of sustenance only, whereas the farmer suffers a diminution of one half of his whole income. Nothing, then, can be so fallacious as the vulgar notion of judging of the enormous profits that the farmer derives from high prices that are occasioned by a deficiency of crop.

But severe as his loss is in this case, that loss is still farther augmented by reason of tythe wherever it is exacted. We have seen, page 410, that in the case above stated, the price to the consumer must be raised to above 6s. and 6d. per bushel, in consequence of the tythe, instead of 5s. and 6d. before the farmer can be indemnified. Now, the price of 5 bushels (the amount of his free produce in an average year) at 6s. and 6d. is 32s. and 6d.; from which, if you deduct the tythe of 12 bushels at 6s. and 6d. value 78s. that will be 7s. and 8d. there will remain 24s. and 10d. to the farmer; viz. 2s. and 8d. less than where no tythe was drawn at 5s. and 6d. per bushel.

But in the scanty crop, there being only 2 bushels of free produce, this, at 6s. and 6d. per bushel, is 13s. and 6d. to which add one-fourth (the rise of price) 3s. 4d.  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; in all 16s. 10d.  $\frac{1}{2}$ . But the value of nine bushels, at 6s. and 6d. is 58s. and 6d. add one-fourth (the rise of price) viz. 14s. 7d.  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; in all, 73s. 1d.  $\frac{1}{2}$ ; which, divided by ten, for tythe, is 7s. 3d.  $\frac{1}{4}$  which deducted from 16s. and 10d.  $\frac{1}{2}$  there will remain only 9s. and 7d. to the farmer, instead of 27s. and 6d. (page 409) in an ordinary year, with the price of 5s. and 6d. where no tythe is exacted; or 24s. in a plentiful year at the low prices where the tythe is actually drawn. Thus it appears, that the farmer's profits are greatly diminished when there is a scanty crop, although there be a proportional rise of price even without tythe; but where tythe is drawn, that diminished profit is still farther greatly reduced thereby; so that, before the farmer can possibly be enabled to go on in his business without bankruptcy, the price to the con-

sumer must be still farther augmented, to the great detriment of every individual in the community, except the tythe owner alone, whose income is thereby augmented.

And what good purpose, it may be asked, is to be served by this general restriction to the exertions of industry? Under one point of view it would not seem to prove any benefit to the owner of the tythe. For if, in the present state of things, it prevents any improvement of the soil, he can never be benefited by the right that he holds to draw the tythe of that corn, which, in consequence of that very claim of right, never can be produced. It is true indeed, that although, in consequence of this arrangement, he can draw no more tythe than he would do if all such improved lands were to go free; yet, as the quantity of corn produced in the country is thereby greatly diminished, so as to be less than can supply the effective demand, yet, the price of that grain being greatly enhanced beyond what it would be, his income is thus augmented, though the quantity of tythe corn be the same, or less than before; so that, although the public in general deeply suffers by this circumstance, he himself *seems* to be rather a gainer by it. Such, no doubt, are the short-sighted views and selfish considerations that influence some persons; but the gain to them is rather apparent than real; for the price of every necessary article being raised at the same time, his general expenditure nearly keeps pace with the rise of his income. But the operation of tythe does not stop here; its influence goes farther, and produces a reaction that diminishes the income of the tythe owner himself in

a much higher degree than the small rise that is derived from the source just stated.

Every one knows that there has been a great deal of very good corn land in the kingdom that has been converted into grafts-land within the last fifty years; one great cause of which alteration has been the pressure of the tythe upon corn lands, compared to that which it yields in grafts. The difference between the amount of the tythe in these two cases is such, as to be alone a very good profit to the farmer. This proves a powerful lure to divert his attention from the rearing of corn to that of grafts; and, though the average produce of the farm must be thus greatly diminished, yet, as the farmer's expences are still more diminished, he may find it, upon the whole, a profitable change to himself; so that he is thus tempted to adopt it, without throwing away a thought upon the consequences that may result from it to others. Setting aside other considerations for the present, I shall only take notice of the great defalcation that must thus be experienced in the circumstances of the tythe owner, whose income is not only greatly diminished, but whose expenditure is as necessarily augmented, in consequence of the rise of price in the necessities of life that results from the great decrease in the quantity of grain produced in the island, and its consequent rise of price. Thus does it happen, that by straining the bow too tight it snaps asunder, and loses its whole influence at once; whereas, had it been used with moderation, it might have continued serviceable for many years.

From all these views of the subject, then, it appears

to be undeniable, that, whatever effect the rigid exaction of tythe may have on other parts of the community, it can in no sense prove beneficial in general to the owners of tythe, although it may happen that a few exceptions to the general rule occur. It would, therefore, be wise policy in that body of men to try if they could devise some more eligible and efficacious means of securing their income, than the tythe, under its present form, affords them. What that is, I may perhaps at another time endeavour to ascertain.

It may appear a matter of not uninteresting investigation to some persons, to discover how it should have happened that of two devices which have been carried into effect by the same set of men, for the purpose of drawing alike from the soil the means of subsistence to a certain body of men who do not take any concern in the cultivation of that soil, one should prove so highly beneficial, and the other so singularly prejudicial to the interests of the community at large. I shall, therefore, endeavour to unravel this seeming mystery, because it may lead to useful practical deductions in the science of political economy.

Men, it is sufficiently obvious, have gradually fallen into the practice of paying rent for land, merely in consequence of a great many practical efforts of the parties concerned each to promote his own interest in the best manner he could, and not from any preconceived idea of any particular plan, far less from any view of either augmenting or diminishing the public welfare. Philosophers and legislators had no concern whatever in prescribing rules, or influencing individuals, in this respect; each was left at perfect freedom

to adjust his own concerns in the best manner he could, under no other restraints than those which a regard to justice and mutual good faith suggest. This device, then, is merely the result of one of those harmonies in nature which the Supreme Being hath originally decreed should universally result from the operation of the principle of self-love, or individual interest, regulated by justice. This actuating principle of self-love, which so universally influences all human beings, is so perpetually awake, and so scrupulously accurate, in all investigations, that the smallest circumstance cannot escape its notice; and it is so fertile in resources, that it adapts itself instantly to the smallest change of circumstances with the most perfect propriety. It regards neither the past nor the future; the present alone is all about which it is interested; so that the smallest obstruction thwarting its views, from past arrangements that no longer accord with the present order of things, is immediately removed, and perfection for the present, in as far as the mutation of human affairs, and the weakness of human faculties will admit, is the necessary result of it.

The unceasing operation of this principle, exerted continually by many millions of human beings, effects, in a manner totally unseen by those who are to be benefited by it, and with the utmost ease and regularity, things that would far exceed the most exalted stretch of the human faculties only imperfectly to comprehend. An instance of this I gave (in regard to the supplying of the city of London with provisions) in a former Number of this work (Vol. III. page 40) to which I beg leave to refer the reader. The means of

equalising the value of the produce of land of different degrees of fertility, by means of rent, affords another example of the same kind: a device that human reason could not, *à priori*, have conceived; nor could any law that human wisdom could devise for restraining individuals in this respect, and for compelling them to act after any prescribed form, do any thing else than derange this harmony of nature, and introduce confusion and distress; because the law admits not of those frequent changes which the ever-varying state of human affairs renders indispensably necessary.

Here, then, we discover the clue that is to lead us out of this labyrinth, and explain the enigma that I proposed to solve. Would to God it were as easy to persuade fallible legislators to be diffident of the universality of their wisdom, and the stability of that power which they too often assume, as it will be to prove that they ought to be so.

Tythe is obviously a legislative arrangement. The idea of it never could have arisen from the concurring interests of individuals, mutually checking and correcting partial aberrations till circumstances brought it to settle in the form that it now assumes. It must have been originally of positive institution; the forms under which it was to be demanded and paid must have been prescribed, and the fulfilment of these regulations enforced by penalties. Like every other law, therefore, this one, if it should have been devised by the most consummate wisdom, so as to have been liable to no objection at the time it was enacted, could only be applicable to the then existing circumstances; and no sooner would these circumstances change, than

the regulations would become imperfect, because they were only properly adapted to circumstances that have now ceased to exist. But, though the changes in the state of human affairs are unceasing, yet these changes are so gradual as for the most part to escape notice at the time: like the growth of corn, whose progression is invariable; yet it is by such imperceptible increments that the most steady observer is unable to mark a progress by any other means than that of comparing the whole plant at somewhat distant periods with some invariable standard. Such precisely is the progress of human affairs; but, as there is no invariable standard which can be readily applied in this case, it often happens that great and important changes have actually taken place before they are observed by any one; and, in general, these changes are very great indeed before they can become perceptible to legislators, who are, in too many cases, the last to *feel* them by the only sure touchstone of self-interest. It thus happens, that the political derangements which arise from the unvariable regulations of the law, as applied to the never-ending mutability of human affairs, have proceeded very far, and produced very powerful influences, as affecting the interests of individuals in a silent and imperceptible manner, before they attract the notice of legislators in the smallest degree. What is the natural consequence of this? It being the interest of certain individuals that those derangements which have taken place, and in consequence of which they have obtained an undue advantage over other individuals, who suffer by it, should still continue, their utmost ingenuity is exerted to represent things to those

who are not immediately affected by the changes, in such a light as that the truth cannot be discovered. And, as the hope of gain operates as a stimulus of ten times more energy than the apprehension of loss, and as men are in general disposed to act from habit, without much reflection, the regulations, now become faulty, are still continued in force; till, by degrees, the derangement has become so great, and the interest of so many powerful individuals is involved in the support of the established law, that it becomes more than a Herculean labour to effect a change in it. The Augean stable is so full that it requires a resolution greater than belongs to man (where his individual interest is not deeply involved in it) even to think of looking at it. In this way regulations that have been the result of prospective legislation, when they have been of long standing, are in general the source of the greatest political disorders that have ever prevailed among mankind; and too often lay the foundation of those tumultuous and illegal excesses which are the forerunners of massacres, revolutions, and the destruction of empires.

In the infancy of society, while men live on fruits and the other spontaneous productions of the fields; even in the pastoral state, where herds and flocks have been reared on immense tracts appropriated to the support of a few inhabitants, and where, of course, the manners of the people are simple, and their wants are few, perhaps no mode of providing for the support of a select few, whose time was employed in the ministration of sacred duties, could be so natural, so little burdensome to the bulk of the people, and therefore

so proper, as that of tythe. Even where agriculture in the proper sense of the word has begun to be practised, where a few fields are tilled up in the best parts of the soil, without the necessity of manuring or expensive culture, and where these fields may be abandoned as soon as the crops begin to fall off, and other fresh and fertile fields may be converted into corn lands in their stead; when the notion of permanent property in land has scarcely begun to take place; where men are of course far removed from that state of society which gave rise to the idea of *rent*, and where their wants were abundantly supplied by furnishing what was necessary for the mere subsistence of the individuals who were entitled to receive it in that state of society; still the payment of tythe was so easy, and the amount of it so small, that it could have been in no respect burdensome to any one. But, after men have multiplied to such a degree, that the spontaneous produce of the fields is by no means sufficient to furnish a subsistence to the people; when it becomes necessary for that purpose to manure, to till, to dig, to drain marshes, and to convert every field to that use for which it is best calculated to yield an abundant return; when the science of agriculture becomes an intricate study, and the practice of it a laborious and expensive employment; where it has become necessary not only to appropriate the soil to individual owners, but to make the cultivator purchase the liberty to cultivate that soil for a limited time by the payment of *rent*; where a diversity of arts have been introduced to furnish innumerable luxuries, that were totally unknown in the earlier state of society; where money

has been invented, and merchandise practised with a view to facilitate the exchange of these luxuries; where the original simplicity of manners has been long since abandoned, a difference of ranks established, and the accumulation of wealth, which constitutes power, has become a science studied by all; where more of the produce of the earth becomes necessary to supply the wants of one man than might have been sufficient to support a thousand; and where, of course, what was only a small body set apart for particular purposes has become an immense multitude, which, like Aaron's serpent, threatens to devour all others:—In such a state of society, can it be supposed that those arrangements which were proper at the earlier periods can be in any degree suitable to the circumstances of the present times! No proposition, assuredly, could be more absurd, than it would be to maintain that such is the case; yet in this predicament must all those place themselves who support the opinion that no alteration ought ever to be made in the mode of providing a subsistence for that body of men for whose use tythe was originally appropriated; and it is to the prevalence of this opinion that we are to attribute many of those political derangements which have long been felt, and have deeply affected this country; though the leading causes of these derangements have been but too little adverted to.

That a wonderful change in regard to the supply of food for its inhabitants has taken place in this island within the last half century, is acknowledged on all hands; the effects of which, especially of late years, have become such as to excite the most serious sen-

sations in every sober and deliberative mind. This evil, like most others, has been produced by the joint co-operation of many concurring causes; but among these there is no one that has contributed more seriously to augment the evil, or whose influence it will be more difficult to counteract, than the operation of *tythe*. This has been long felt in this and every other country in Europe; in some of which it has contributed largely to produce events that have justly filled the minds of men with astonishment and horror. In this country, from the general liberty that prevails, it operates in a different manner. Instead of being productive of that kind of oppression which drives men to extremities, and terminates in bursts of daring desperation, which, once overleaping the bounds of law, admits of no barrier short of absolute destruction to circumscribe its fury;—men here have contrived to free themselves from the oppressive load rather by evasion than open force; so that the calamity comes upon us under a different form: its approaches are thus more slow, although its effects, unless they be more cautiously guarded against than seems to be as yet in the contemplation of most men, may, it is to be feared, be not less certain in the end, or less dreadful. Whole counties in some places, that were lately in corn, and ought still to have been so, are now converted into grass lands; and large districts in every part of the country are in the same predicament. What man who reads this cannot point out large tracts that were excellent corn land within the memory of man, but are now in grass? And all this has been done chiefly to avoid the expense of a corn tythe. The farmers

who occupied these lands—where are they gone? (for one grasier can occupy the room of twenty corn farms) the answer is easy; they are gone into trade or manufactures; have become settlers in some of our distant colonies, or have entered into some of those numerous employments which these so abundantly put within their reach. And what are the consequences of this change? The answer to this question is likewise but too easy. A dreadful deficiency in the quantity of human sustenance produced by our fields, is the necessary and unavoidable consequence of it: for it is a fact not to be controverted by any one who is acquainted with the subject, that good corn land, under a skilful mode of culture, may be made to afford four times the quantity of human sustenance (I speak here greatly below the truth) that the same land can ever be made to yield while it is in grass. From this cause it is that we at this present moment experience a defective supply of provisions in the home market, without any extraordinary inclemency of seasons, and an enormous rise of price, which deranges the economy of every family, and which, under the influence of another ill judged law dictated by humanity, threatens to strip the respectable part of the community (those especially in the agricultural line) of the little property that remains to them, in order to feed the inferior ranks, who, becoming thus less industrious, must become at the same time more wicked and disorderly; and thus augment instead of diminish the evil which at present we feel so oppressive.

Such is the natural progres of that political evil whose origin I have slightly marked, but whose ter-

mination no man at present can possibly foresee. I have probed the wound with a firm though gentle hand; from a wish, though I acknowledge without any hope, that it may induce some one who has more power than I have to apply a remedy while it still admits (if it really does admit) of a cure: an ineffectual wish is all that falls to my share.

I am sufficiently aware that there are some short-sighted persons who believe, and many interested writers who wish to persuade their readers, that there has been of late years more ground brought into tillage in England than has been abstracted from it; and the number of bills that have been passed for the inclosure of commons is the pretext which they lay hold of for bewildering the judgment of their readers. No man, however, who opens his eyes, and does not shut his ears against the information that he will receive in travelling through this country, if he seriously wishes to receive information, can be fascinated by this *ignis fatuus*. He must see every where, a few small districts only excepted, immense tracts of grass land that in the memory of man were corn lands; and even, respecting the commons that have been inclosed, in nine cases out of ten he will find that where they have been brought into culture, other corn land has been laid into grass to make room for that culture; and that for the most part these commons themselves have been again abandoned by the plough long before they were in a state that would have made grass the proper crop.

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